

Name: _____

Date: _____

High School Worksheets on Historical Text Analysis

Read the text below and answer the questions!

The Emancipation Proclamation (1863)

On January 1, 1863, during the third year of the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. This executive order declared that all enslaved people in Confederate states "shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free." It specifically targeted areas in rebellion against the Union, while leaving slave-holding border states loyal to the Union and Confederate territories under Union control unaffected. This selective application was a strategic move, designed to weaken the Confederacy's economic and social structure by disrupting its reliance on enslaved labor.

The proclamation marked a significant shift in the focus of the Civil War. Initially fought to preserve the Union, the war now had the added moral purpose of abolishing slavery. This change in priorities resonated both domestically and internationally. By framing the conflict as a fight for freedom, the Union gained broader support, particularly from nations like Britain and France, which had already abolished slavery.

The Emancipation Proclamation also had a transformative effect on African Americans. It allowed formerly enslaved individuals and free African Americans to enlist in the Union Army, providing the military with approximately 180,000 additional troops by the end of the war. These soldiers not only contributed to Union victories but also demonstrated the courage and capability of African Americans in the fight for their freedom.

While the proclamation did not immediately free all enslaved people, it laid the foundation for the abolition of slavery in the United States. It set the stage for the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, which formally ended slavery nationwide. By redefining the war's purpose and altering the course of history, the Emancipation Proclamation remains one of the most consequential documents in American history.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the primary purpose of the Emancipation Proclamation when it was issued?

2. Why did the Emancipation Proclamation only apply to Confederate states in rebellion?

3. How did the proclamation change the Union's goals in the Civil War?

4. What was the international impact of the Emancipation Proclamation on the Union's cause?

5. How did the Emancipation Proclamation affect African Americans during the war?

6. What role did African American soldiers play in the Union Army after the proclamation was issued?
